

Message Text

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41

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SUBJECT: TORRIJOS ON CANAL NEGOTIATION

SUMMARY: IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATION
POSED BY COLOMBIAN WRITER GARCIA MARQUEZ, TORRIJOS HAS STATED
THAT U.S. JURISDICTION IN CANAL ZONE WILL END WITHIN THREE
YEARS UNDER A NEW TREATY; INDICATED A PREFERENCE FOR A THIRD
SET OF LOCKS RATHER THAN A SEA LEVEL CANAL; REITERATED VIEWS
ON DURATION AND DEFENSE ISSUES; CONFIRMED THAT VIOLENCE IS
ALTERNATIVE TO A SATISFACTORY TREATY; AND, WITH REFERENCE TO
U.S. BICENTENNIAL, OPINED THAT FOR LATIN AMERICA, NO U.S.
ACTION WOULD BE MORE SIGNIFICANT THAT SIGNING OF A NEW CANAL
TREATY WITH PANAMA. END SUMMARY

1. FORMER SPANISH WIRE SERVICE (EFE) CORRESPONDENT IN PANAMA,
ZOLIO MARTINEZ, HAS WRITTEN A MADRID DATELINE ITEM--PUBLISHED
JUNE 16 IN LOCAL PRESS--SUMMARIZING GENERAL TORRIJOS' RESPONSE
TO QUESTIONS ON THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATION SUBMITTED
BY COLOMBIAN WRITER GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ. ACCORDING
TO THE EFE ARTICLE, GARCIA POSED WRITTEN QUESTIONS
IN HIS CAPACITY AS DIRECTOR OF THE MAGAZINE "ALTERNATIVE."
THE DATE OF TORRIJOS' RESPONSE WAS NOT MENTIONED,
ALTHOUGH ARTICLE STATES IT WAS MADE RECENTLY. SALIENT
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TORRIJOS COMMENTS, AS REPORTED BY EFE, FOLLOW.

2. ON QUESTION OF JURISDICTION, TORRIJOS STATED THAT THE NEGOTIATION HAD FOUND FORMULAS UNDER WHICH U.S. JURISDICTION OVER THE CANAL ZONE WOULD END "WITHIN A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS OF ENTRY INTO FORCE" OF A NEW TREATY. WITH RESPECT TO DURATION, TORRIJOS NOTED THAT WHAT WAS BEING DISCUSSED WAS "REASONABLY SHORT DURATION WITH REGARD TO THE ADMINISTRATION, PROTECTION AND DEFENSE OF THE CANAL BY THE U.S., ALL WITHIN A PROCESS OF INCREASING PANAMANIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE EXERCISE OF THESE RESPONSIBILITIES, UNTIL PANAMA HAS ASSUMED TOTAL CONTROL OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CANAL AT THE TERMINATION OF THE TREATY." ON THE MATTER OF CANAL EXPANSION, TORRIJOS OBSERVED THAT HE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT THE CONVENIENCE TO PANAMA OF A SEA LEVEL CANAL AND THAT A THIRD SET OF LOCKS WOULD BE A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION UNTIL THE YEAR 2025. A SEA LEVEL CANAL, SAID TORRIJOS, WOULD ALTER PANAMA'S GEOGRAPHY AND "DEPERSONALIZE THE COUNTRY;" IT WOULD BE "A STRAIT THROUGH WHICH SHIPS PASS WITHOUT STOPPING." IN ANY CASE, TORRIJOS REPORTEDLY SAID, IF A SEA LEVEL CANAL IS BUILT, IT WOULD BE A TOTALLY PANAMANIAN PROJECT AND PANAMA HAS EXISTING OFFERS OF CAPITAL AND TECHNOLOGY WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE GOP TO UNDERTAKE IT.

3. ADDRESSING THE DEFENSE ISSUE, TORRIJOS STATED THAT "THE CANAL IS AS DEFENSELESS AS A NEWBORN CHILD" AND THAT ITS EFFECTIVE DEFENSE WOULD REQUIRE "A SOLDIER EVERY METER." THE BEST DEFENSE IS "THE AFFECTION OF THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, WHO PROTECT IT AS THEIR OWN AND UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MUST CAUSE IT NO HARM." ACCORDINGLY, THE U.S. MILITARY BASES "HAVE NO RELATION TO THE SECURITY AND PROTECTION OF THE CANAL", AND ARE "USED FOR OTHER PURPOSES IN THE CONTINENT". OBSERVING THAT IT WOULD BE AN ILLUSION TO THINK THAT "BY APPEALING TO THE HUMANITARIANISM OF THE PENTAGON WE ARE GOING TO CONVINCE THEM TO LEAVE TOMORROW," TORRIJOS WAS CONFIDENT THAT A NEW TREATY WOULD RETURN THE MAJORITY OF THE U.S. BASES TO PANAMA AND THAT THOSE REMAINING WOULD BE GRADUALLY DISMANTLED OVER THE TREATY'S LIFE TIME. "WE HOPE," THE GENERAL WAS QUOTED, "THAT THIS GENERATION CAN SEE DEMOLISHED THE LAST EVIDENCE

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OF COLONIALISM ON OUR SOIL."

4. UNDERLINING AMBASSADOR BUNKER'S RECENT WARNING OF THE POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE UNLESS PANAMA'S LEGITIMATE INTERESTS ARE RECOGNIZED, TORRIJOS ASSERTED THAT IF FACED WITH A DECISION WHETHER TO PUT DOWN A POPULAR EXPLOSION OR LEAD A LIBERATION MOVEMENT "WE WILL NEVER CRUSH THE ANTI-COLONIALIST EFFORTS OF OUR PEOPLE." REITERATING THAT A NEW

TREATY MUST BE APPROVED BY A NATIONAL PLEBISCITE,
TORRIJOS WARNED THAT SHOULD THE PEOPLE REJECT THE
TREATY THERE WOULD BE NO ALTERNATIVE OTHER THAN "VIOLENT
ACTIONS TO BREAK THE ANACRONISTIC COLONIALIST STRUCTURE
OF THE CANAL ENCLAVE."

5. HAVING REPEATEDLY CITED THE IMPORTANCE OF LATIN
AND THIRD WORLD SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S CAUSE, TORRIJOS
REPORTEDLY CONCLUDED HIS RESPONSE TO GARCIA BY SAYING THAT
"NOTHING WOULD BE MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR LATIN AMERICA"
THAN FOR THE U.S.--IN HONOR OF ITS ANTI-COLONIALIST ORIGIN--
TO SIGN A NEW CANAL TREATY WITH PANAMA "BEFORE COMPLETING
THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED
STATES"
JORDEN

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